

Latour Warehouse
508 South Water Street (formerly Penn Street)
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1056

HABS
PA
51-PHILA
254-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

LATOUR WAREHOUSE

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PA
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254-

Street Address: 508 South Water Street (formerly Penn Street),
Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Present Owners: Mary and Anthony Gadelski (1958)

Present Use: Warehouse

Brief Statement of Significance: Built 1817-1818, this is an interesting survival of early waterfront commercial building.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Information furnished by M. R. Maurer, Executive Secretary of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, on August 8, 1958 -

Oct. 21, 1779 MATTHEW CLARKSON esq., & Mary h/w and Edward Bonsall, house carpenter, and Hannah h/w grant to Robert Bridges, house carpenter, a lot 20' x 130', extending from Front St. to Penn (now Water Street) (Deed: D-13-113)

ROBERT BRIDGES, house carpenter, died leaving a will of November 9, 1790 and being seized of this lot and a three story brick messuage on the southernmost 18' thereof, his property was willed to his eight children. (See MR-15-618)

June 10, 1817 Tripartite deed between MARY BRIDGES, spinster, JEMIMA BRIDGES, widow, and John Latour, merchant, grants to Latour a messuage and lot, 18' x 130' (Deed: MR-13-618). On March 9, 1818, he is granted a strip of land on Penn St., 2' x 55', contiguous to the lot on the Ns. (See MR-19-238)

Dec. 26, 1850 Peter Jaureche and Francis Troubal, executors of the will of JOHN LATOUR, merchant, grant to Daniel Green, tavern-keeper, all those messuages and two contiguous lots, 18' x 130', plus a strip 2' x 55'. (Deed CWC-78-167)

July 18, 1885 Lewis C. Greene, et al., heirs of DANIEL GREENE, tavern-keeper grant to Charles S. Greene, all their right, title and interest in the same prems. On August 3, 1885, Mary Greene, in her own right as executrix and legatee under the will of Daniel Greene and Eleanor J. Greene, gives deed of confirmation to Charles S. Greene for the above prems. [Information obtained from the records of transfers in Registry Unit, Department of Records (Deeds)]

Oct. 10, 1885 Charles E. Greene & Susan H. h/w grant to Elizabeth P. Powell the same premis. [Information obtained from the records of transfers in Registry Unit, Department of Records (Deeds)]

Nov. 30, 1888 ELLWOOD POWELL and ELIZABETH h/w grant to Charles S. Greene the same premis. [Information obtained from the records of transfers in Registry Unit, Department of Records (Deeds)]

Nov. 19, 1914 Susan N. Greene, Clara E. Greene, Anna H. Greene, executors and trustees of Charles Greene, dec'd and Susan H. Greene, grant to Anthony Gadolski and Mary h/w the same premis. [Information obtained from the records of transfers in Registry Unit, Department of Records (Deeds)]

Present/1958/7 Anthony Gadolski and Mary h/w
Owners: (Purchase recorded November 19, 1914)
Lot: E Front St. 82' 4" S Lombard St.
Front: 18'
Depth: E at a rt angle to Front St. 75',
then on the N line a further width
of 2' and extending of that width
of 20' in further depth 55' to
Water St.
Structures: 2 story brick shop on Front St.

2. Date of erection: Latour apparently built the warehouse in 1817-1818 soon after acquiring the property.
3. Alterations: The window frames appear to be modern and the chimney to have been cut down in height. There are no other apparent alterations.
4. Sources of information: Interview with James Dallett, The Atheneum, Philadelphia, Pa., by James C. Massey, July 30, 1958. Interview with The Very Reverend Joseph A. Cawley, S. J., St. Joseph's R. C. Church, Philadelphia, by James Glen Carr, August 8, 1958. Abraham Ritter, Philadelphia and Her Merchants, As Constituted Fifty and Seventy Years (Philadelphia: Published by the Author, 1860), pages 198-199. Philadelphia Directory (various years 1807-1860).

B. Historical Events Connected with Structure: Baptismal Records in St. Joseph's R. C. Church, Philadelphia, indicate that John Marie Latour was born May 28, 1798, the son of Alexander Cochon Latour and Catherine nee Lafie (or Lafte or Lafsc). He was baptised by Monsieur M. Carr on November 9, 1798, by which time his father had died. If, as these records indicate, John Marie Latour was baptised in the United States, he most likely was also born in the United States.

A John Latour is listed as a merchant in Philadelphia directories beginning in 1807 when John Marie Latour would

have been only nine years old. From 1807 to 1811 this Latour's address is given as 8 Lombard. No directory was published in 1812, but from 1813 through 1847, John Latour's address is given as 261 (now 509) South Front. This is the property adjoining the rear of the warehouse and hence, this would appear to be the Latour who owned the warehouse.

In 1848, John Latour and Company, merchants, 86 South Front, is listed in addition to John Latour, merchant, 261 South Front. In 1849 and, though not clear, apparently in 1850 also, John Latour, merchant, is listed at both of the 1848 addresses. The last entries for John Latour, merchant, are for 1851 and 1852 and list the addresses 15 Walnut and 167 South Third.

Deed QWC-78-167 (see Part I,A,1 of this report) indicates action by executors of the will of John Latour December 26, 1850. Presumably then, Latour died in 1849 or 1850, and the firm continued to operate under his name until 1852, but at a different address for the last two years. In 1860, an Emma E. Latour, widow of John, is listed in the directory.

Something of Latour's business is indicated in the following passage from Ritter, Philadelphia and Her Merchants, pages 198-199: "I cannot pass this corner without a respectful notice of John Latour, celebrated, if for nothing else, as the importer and very popular vendor of salad, or sweet oil.

"He was a merchant in the French trade at No. 8 Lombard street, but subsequently located on the east side of Front street, nearly opposite to Lombard street; but whether here or there, salad oil memorializes him to this day.

"He dates there at and before 1807. . ."

Latour's son, whose first name was variously spelled Amide, Amedee, Amada, and Amadeo, was listed in the Philadelphia directories as either a sea captain or ship master from 1831 to 1849. If the father was an importer, it seems likely that he and his son would have had close business dealings.

Prepared by James C. Massey, July 1958
James Glen Carr, August 1958
Osmond R. Overby, December 1960
Architects, National Park Service

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An interesting and picturesque survival of an early waterfront commercial structure.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 21' x 50'-6", two-and-a-half stories plus cellar, rectangular plan.

2. Foundations: Rubble stone.
3. Wall construction: Red brick laid in common bond, six or seven rows of stretchers to one row of headers. Front and rear facades painted over brick.
4. Porches, stoops, bullheads: None.
5. Chimneys: Plain stuccoed brick chimney on south wall near east front has apparently been cut down from its original height.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Four two-leaf doors: plain board doors, centered on first and second floors front and rear, strap hinges, first floor front door sheathed with sheet metal. Single-leaf door near south corner of front for separate alley passage to the rear does not lead into the building; construction similar to other doors.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Front--two windows on each floor; rear two windows on second floor, one on first. Double-hung wood sash, six-over-nine lights. Window frames composed of circular mouldings. Shutters on front only--board and batten, strap hinges, sheet metal sheathed on first floor; similar to the two-leaf doors.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gambrel, sloped front and rear; tar paper covered.
 - b. Cornice: Simple brick cornice.
 - c. Dormers: Picturesque and unusual dormer on east front with door and projecting hood containing an iron hook for lifting goods up front of building and into the doors at each floor. The inside of this projecting hood is concave and plastered.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: Simple open rectangular interior with stairway and hoist. A separate alley passageway runs from the front to the rear on the south side of the first floor.
2. Stairways: Plain wood stairway in the northeast corner; trap door to basement.
3. Flooring: Random-width board floors, unfinished; huge summer beam runs front to rear in the center of the building. This summer beam appears to be an old ship mast.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Unfinished interior--brick walls and floor joists exposed.
5. Doorways and doors: None.
6. Trim: None.
7. Hardware: Original strap hinges on shutters and doors; original pintles for shutters.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: On the south side of the second floor there appears to have been a forge; the opening is 4'-8" deep and 6'-3" wide. There are no other fireplaces.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Building faces east on a built-up city street.
2. Enclosures: Board fence around rear yard.
3. Outbuildings: At the rear of the warehouse and facing on Front Street is a three-story row house (built c. 1779-1790) which was Latour's residence for many years.
4. Landscaping: None except small rear yard paved with brick.

Prepared by James C. Messey, Architect
National Park Service
December 1960